



HISTORICAL SKETCH • EATONS BAPTIST CHURCH
1772 - 1972



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Historical Sketch of Eatons Baptist Church

1772 - 1972

Today we pause and ponder the historic activities and events that have shaped and etched the history of Eatons Church for 200 years.

Much of the information contained in this article has been covered by former historians, but as we have searched through the available memorabilia we felt it was appropriate to give a resume of past historical highlights, in order to connect the past with the present.

This church is one of the oldest in the upper Yadkin valley, and one of the most historical, in the piedmont section of the state. It was influential in establishing other churches, of the same faith, in this area. It has among the oldest original records of Baptist churches in North Carolina.

It was constituted as a regular Baptist church on October 5, 1772, on the "Banks of Dutchmans Creek ", in Rowan County, in the Forks of the Yadkin. (The " Forks of the Yadkin " was a term used loosely to indicate all territory between the Yadkin and South Yadkin rivers which includes Davie County " . By Dr. Adelaide Fries.) . This settlement was made by a small group of pioneers, largely of English extraction, who had migrated from Pennsylvavania. Its territorial boundaries extended from the Forks of the Yadkin to Wilkesboro. There were " meeting places " in various parts of the territory to meet the needs and conveniences of the early settlers. These were: The Forks, Boone's Ford, Deep Creek, Timber Ridge, Dutchmans Creek and Mulberry Fields. Therefore, " our meeting house " or " the usual place of meeting " seems to have been used in reference to the church on " Dutchmans Creek ", which identifies its location, and acceptance of the fact that it was the " mother church " .

GIFT OF MOSSA E. EATON

The records at this time contained the names of the ten original members. This included the name of Rev. William Cook, the first Pastor. (He came to this church from Warren County, North Carolina). Others were: James Tompkins, Ebenezer Fairchild, Abraham Adams, Triphena Adams, Thomas Eastep, Susanna Eastep, David Reavis, Jamima Reavis, and Jesse Reavis. The location of the church at that time was in that part of Rowan County, which is now Davie.

Records indicate that this organization made progress from its original beginning until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. About half of the members were sympathetic toward the American cause, which apparently caused considerable disturbance, or conflict among the members. Of particular interest is this entry in the Dutchman Creek Church record book, under the date of November 3, 1775, * " It was agreed by the brethern concerning the American cause, if any of the brethern see fit to joyn in it they have the leberty to do so without being called to an account by the Church for it but wheather joyn or not joyn they should be used with brotherly love and freedom for the futer ". It should be noted that this happened about five months before the action taken by the men in Mecklenberg County, and eight months before the Declaration of Independence. It indicates that discussion was rife in The Forks of the Yadkin, between the Whigs and the Tories, and suggests that pressure had been brought to bear upon the church to declare discipline for those on the American side, which was definitely refused, though the Loyalist were also left at liberty, so far as the church was concerned. By January 30, 1778 sentiment had grown more tense than in 1775, and five members were excommunicated because they signed a protest which was being circulated by Loyalist (Tories) ". - Copied from - Churches of the Colonial Period in Rowan County. By Miss Adelaide Fries. (A copy of this is available at the Davie County Public Library.)

* " Original" spelling used in this paragraph.

The above episode caused much trouble and confusion. Looking back from our vantage point, today, we are inclined to feel that the after-math of this disturbance may have produced a disruption in the organization which resulted in a lack of records over a period of approximately three years. Available records do show that Dutchmans Creek Baptist Church continued to function for a short time after the war, but no records exist covering the period from 1787 to December 1790. Existing records at this time (Church minutes) substantiate its re-organization and it was given the name of Eatons. " At the re-organization, Rev. Lazarus Whitehead was installed as pastor... He served the church for a number of years with signal success... He was a man of more than ordinary ability ". (From the file in Baptist Collection Room, Wake Forest University). The choice of a name at this time, was probably influenced by the fact that the first land was given by Daniel Eaton. He was the son of John Eaton, who had owned three hundred and sixty acres in the locality. John was buried in the church cemetery after having died in September 1789, age 73 years. This gift of land was on Dutchmans Creek, next to Lazrus Whitehead and Charles Hunt, and proved in August 1799. The deed reads to - " Isaac Estep, trustee of the Baptist Society and congregation at Eaton's Meeting House do freely give and grant and to his successors in office forever ". It contains one acre, two rods, and twenty-four poles. (Copied from Book 16, page 715, May 25, 1799. Register of Deeds Office, Rowan County, Salisbury, North Carolina.) When Daniel Eaton's estate was divided among his heirs in 1825, the portion laid out for Eatons Meeting House was excepted from Lot #3, the portion assigned to Mary Horn. This extends North from the present cemetery to an iron post at Greasy Branch. Church records show that Ebenezer Fairchild was appointed on April 3, 1773 to secure a deed to this property. On October 2, 1773 the " Church met and the deed was signed ", (-from minutes of Dutchmans Creek Baptist Church) The " Old log meeting house " was on this strip of land and it has been established as having stood, approximately, at the North East corner of the

lawn at the present parsonage. "It was made of large hand-hewn logs from the nearby forest. The roof was made of oak shingles, the floor of dirt and the seats from split logs, smoothed down for seating comfort with no backs to the benches. Holes four or five feet wide were left for windows. This building was torn down in 1854 and the material later used for a school building. "It was called the Naylor School house and was placed on the site of Mr. Everette Etchison's present Home ". (As told by Mrs. Susan Etchison Eaton).

How Dutchman's Creek got its name - According to Soelle's Diary - " The Deep Creek and adjacent sections were beginning to team with settlers. English speaking more than all others. There were also many Germans...Further south the German settlers were so numerous they had given their name to Dutchman's Creek which flowes into the South Yadkin. " (History of North Carolina Baptist, Vol. II, Page 104, by G. W. Paschal.)

The churches at this time were involved in education, and the standards set for schools were high. Fork Academy was an example. The Trustees for the Baptist Church were instructed to secure a lot beside the church to erect a building in order that C. A. Rominger, with an A.B. degree from Wake Forest College could open school in the fall. Following him as a teacher was Professor John T. Alderman, who later became Supt. of the Academy. (From - History of Fork Church. By Wilson F. Merrell). Mr. Alderman later became Supt. of Schools in Davie County, from 1885-1891. About 1890 an article written by him appeared in the Bibical Recorder, which states that - " Among the oldest records of Baptist Churches in North Carolina, are the records of Old Dutchmans Creek Baptist Church in Rowan County ". The preservation of these valuable records are due primarily to the concern felt by the pioneer membership for same. We find in the minutes of a church conference on February 25, 1854, that Ben F. Eaton reported that "On May last, according to the order of the Church", that he had purchased a record book, and had secured the services of J. H. Foote and S. O. Tatum to transcribe the contents of the original church records to this new book, and having

done so, he presented said book to the Church. This book is of legal size, bound in brown leather. It contains a complete history of activities of the church from 1790 to 1902. It is housed in the Baptist Collection Room at Wake Forest University Library. The preparation and keeping of records has been of paramount importance throughout this Church's long history. This topic came up at "Home Coming " a few years past. Mr. J. B. Cain, Sr., who has served this church in many capacities, was acting as moderator. He called for speeches, or comments from the floor. Miss Flossie Martin and Miss May Green, rose and urged that these valuable records be placed in the hands of Wake Forest University for safe keeping. Today they are housed in the Baptist Collection Room at this University.

According to research done by Mrs. J. W. Etchison, the first Sabbath School was established at Eatons in April 1845. An item of historical interest, regarding the status of Sabbath Schools, is an old letter written April 18, 1825 and preserved by Mrs. Susan Etchison Eaton. It was addressed to the "Manager of the Sabbath School at Eaton's Meeting House" which indicates that efforts were being made to establish Sabbath Schools throughout the area at that time. The letter was written by W. T. Watts, Corresponding Secretary, regarding the Olive Branch Sabbath School Union. It states " There shall be a Sabbath School Union established in the Forks of the Yadkin, the object of which shall be to establish a Sabbath School as far as practicable in every neighborhood for the sole purpose of teaching the rising generation to read the scriptures, and to give them religious instruction, and then to aid in bringing them under the influence of Christian principles and correct moral habits ". John Dismukes was the first president of this organization, and it is felt that he was the same John Dismukes who was buried in Eaton's Church Cemetery. He was born May 20, 1773 and died October 25, 1855 at the age of 82 years.

The events of growth and change of historical importance are: the erection and

dedication of a new building in 1848. This was placed on the crest of the hill, East of and near the site of the picturesque Old Dutchmans Creek Church. When this building was remodeled in 1890, galleries were removed, vestibule and bell tower were added. When those interested in the addition of a bell tower were told there was no need for such, as they did not have a bell, Mrs. Mary Smith Hunter, (Mrs. John Hunter) volunteered to head the drive to raise funds for that purpose, which they did. This same bell hangs today in the tower of the present building. Its peals have sent forth the call to worship for many years, and it was also rung, or tolled on the occasion of a death in the community. It has served well as a means of communication in this rural country-side.

The celebration of the one hundredth anniversary was held with appropriate recognition and the history given at that time was written by Dr. J W. Wiseman. It is a scholarly article, dealing with the philosophies and humanities of that era, and how they were developed through daily living and the importance of the church in the lives of the people in that day. "In reviewing the past history of this church for a century, the time would be ill spent if we could not find some good that would make this generation the better for such knowledge... It would be well for us to note those beginnings of Piety and Religion in this, the then backwoods of our lovely land."

"The Province of North Carolina was originally settled by a hardy, uneducated, and restless race of liberty-loving men, fleeing from restraints of tyranny and oppression in other lands, choosing rather to brave the wilderness with its wild animals and wilder savages, than to remain under the restraints of the laws administered by an over-bearing aristocracy "... "Thus they entered the great school of mankind relieved from all conventional restraints. This school required all men, depending on none other, to take care of themselves...Thus learning well the lesson of self-government "...

We are indebted to Miss Flossie Martin and Miss Mary J. Heitman for the

preservation of information on the early gravestones. There are approximately 58 inscriptions copied from stones beginning in 1778. This information is contained in a card file, which is one of the records available in the Baptist Collection Room Library, Wake Forest University, and at the History Room in The Davie County Public Library.

The present brick building, which was begun in 1925, was dedicated on the 5th Sunday in June 1930. This building was made possible, largely, through a generous gift from William T. Eaton of Winston-Salem. He was a former resident of Davie County, and his ancestors and relatives had worshipped at this church for many years. A history of this church, from its earliest days up to this time, was written by Mrs. J. W. Etchison, and placed in the cornerstone. (This same history was read later at a meeting of the South Yadkin Association.)

Committees that served during the construction of this building are as follows:

Building Committee of Eatons Church in the year 1925.

S. M. Brewer, Chairman
J. B. Cain, Sr., Secretary
Charles S. Eaton, J.W. Etchison, J.D. Collette
Rev. E. W. Turner and W. T. Eaton, Honorary Members

Finance Committee for Church Building Fund

R.W. Collette, Chairman
Mrs. A.W. Ferebee, Secretary
J. M. Eaton, Treasurer
G. Leagans, Mrs. Charles S. Eaton, Mrs. J. W. Etchison

An attractive and adequate parsonage was started in 1958 and completed in 1963. In May 1958 a motion was made to build a pastorium on a site north of the Cemetery. Appointed on the building Committee were:

Herman Brewer, Paul Eaton, Herman Boger,
Jo Ann Bowles, Mrs. A.W. Ferebee and Mrs. Lester Richie

Timber cut on the church property was to be used in construction. That which was not needed was to be sold and the money applied to the building fund.

Plans for the building were drawn by Rev. J. W. Owen. He was the first full-time pastor to serve Eatons Church. On September 22, 1963, the new building was dedicated. Refreshments for the occasion were furnished by the Woman's Missionary Society of the Church. The pastor at this time was Rev. Edward Laughridge.

The care of the cemetery has been greatly improved under the supervision of Mr. Lester Richie, who is currently Treasurer for the maintenance fund for this purpose. Land for its enlargement has been made possible by Mr. Joab Collette, Mr. Paul Eaton and Mr. Lester Eaton. Grading and drainage for this new extension was made possible by Miss May Green. Many others have contributed generously to a Memorial Fund.

Other evidence of growth and influence are:

Woman's Missionary Union, organized in 1911.

B. Y. P. U., organized in 1918.

Churches organized from Eatons Church:

Providence, Surry County	January, 1805
Cross Roads, Yadkin County	September 1835
Union Hill, Davidson County	March, 1851
Farmington, Davie County	February 1878
Cedar Creek, Davie County (Colored)	1872

Ministers that have been ordained from this church are:

William Garner	1834
Edward M. Chaffin	1835
Nathan S. Chaffin	1847
Thomas Miller	1849
William Brunt	1863
Millard F. Booe	1918
H. Wade Hutchens	1936
Cecil Ellis Leagans, Jr.	1964
Licensed to Preach	

Pastors who have served the church are:

William Cook, 1772-1790; Lazarus Whitehead, 1796-1805; Brumley Coker (Cooker?), 1805-14; William Britton 1816-23; John Angel, 1824-28; William Dowd, 1829-1830;

Lowell, 1831; John Angel, 1832-33; William Swanson, 1834-35; Jonathan Thomas, 1835; Barton Roby, 1836-42; Paul Phifer, 1843; Stephen Horn, 1844; Mark May, 1845-48; Nathan S. Chaffin, 1849; Thomas Miller, 1850-52; Nathan S. Chaffin, 1852-53; R. H. Griffith, 1853-57; William Turner 1857-67; J. B. Marsh, 1868-72; W. R. Gwaltney, 1873-76; Moses Baldwin, 1877; R. W. Crews, 1878-81; S. F. Conrad, 1882-84; W. J. Hopkins, 1885-86; W. G. Brown, 1887-89; C. S. Cashwell, 1890-93; J. N. Stallings, 1894-97; S. D. Swaim, 1898-1904; C. S. Cashwell, 1905-1910; Walter E. Wilson, 1911-14; D. W. Littleton, 1915- ; W. H. Dodd, 1916-19; S. W. Hall, 1919-23; E. W. Turner, 1924-25; C. S. Cashwell, 1926-28; L. R. Tate, 1928-29; V. M. Swaim, 1930-32; E. W. Turner, 1932-34; H. T. Penry, 1934-37; Dallas G. Renegar, 1937-46; no pastor listed 1947; H. W. Hutchens, 1948-56; no pastor listed 1957; J. W. Owen, 1958-62; Edward H. Laughridge, 1962-64; B. C. McMurray, 1964-68; Walter Howell 1968-70; Bill Bruton, 1971-
John Boyce Cain, Sr., served several months as a lay minister during a time when the Church was without a Pastor.

Only a partial list of Church Clerks during the early history, is available. Ebenezer Fairchild was chosen first clerk and James Tompkins was chosen the first deacon. Other clerks are as follows: James H. Foote, S. O. Tatum, Ben F. Eaton, J. W. Clifford, Dr. J. W. Wiseman, L. A. Furches, S. V. Furches, J. H. Cain, 1882, J. W. Eaton, 1883-90, W. A. Langston, 1890-1895, G. L. White, 1895-97. Those who served during the nineteen hundreds: R. L. Booe, C. M. Collette, J. B. Cain, Sr., W. S. Collette, Mrs. Bonnie D. Ferebee, Jo Ann Bowles, Marietta Rummage, W. W. Ferebee, Mrs. Bessie E. Ferebee, Mrs. Thelma C. Driver, Herman Brewer, Mrs. Ruby C. Leagsns, Mrs. Minnie W. Pope, Miss Evelyn Sink, Mrs. Brenda Eaton, Mrs. Kay Latham.

Approximately 1443 members have been received into the fellowship of Eatons Church since its organization two hundred years ago.

Eatons Church was a member of the Association at Strawberry, Virginia, 1772-1790; Yadkin, (As an arm of Strawberry) 1786-89; Yadkin, 1790-1873; South Yadkin, 1873 (Baptist Collection Room, Wake Forest University.) According to Rev. J. F. Fletcher's history, p. 112, there were " 13 Baptist Churches in North Carolina belonging to Strawberry Association in Virginia until 1790, when released to organize the Yadkin Association. They met at Eatons Meeting House August 28-30, 1790 when they organized the Yadkin Association ". A list of the churches and their delegates may be found on p-112, " The Land of Wilkes ", by Judge Johnson J. Hayes.

The trustees of Eaton's Church hold the following deeds:

1. Daniel Eaton, 1799, Book 16, page 715, May 25, 1799.

Register of Deeds Office, Rowan County Court House,
Salisbury, North Carolina.

2. John Jones, 1845, Book 10, page 529.

3. N. S. Chafin, lots 3 and 4, 1845-1848, Book 10,
pages 531 and 533.

4. Charles Collette, 1874, Book 10, page 534

5. Ebenezer Frost, 1874, page 532.

The last four listed may be found in the Register of Deeds Office,

Davie County, Mocksville, North Carolina.

Two items of general interest in this area are - " Among the first members of Dutchmans Creek Baptist Church were: Edward, George, and Jonathan Boone, brothers of Daniel Boone, pioneer explorer of the Kentucky wilderness. Edward and George Boone joined the Dutchmans Creek Church by baptism on August 7, 1774." The Rev. John Gano, who was an Army Chaplain, during the Revolutionary War, and later Pastor of the Jersey Baptist Church, lived temporarily in Eatons community, and while here on March 25, 1792, " brother Isaac Eaton was ordained deacon of this church by the Revs. John Gano and Lazrus Whitehead ". (From, Colonial Churches in North Carolina by J. K. Rouse).

" In 1773-1774 a reference is made in the Dutchman Creek Baptist Church record book of a second visit made by Rev. Gano to this region, and while here he met and married Sarah Bryant, Widow of Captain Thomas Bryant, and daughter of Colonel Jonathan Hunt. " (History of North Carolina Baptists, Vol. 2, pages 168-169, by Dr. G. W. Paschal.

As the church projects itself into a new century, among plans for its continued growth are; remodeling fund, education building, organ, etc.

The committee for the preparation of this historical sketch was appointed by Rev. Walter Howell in 1970. The information contained herein, has been searched from Church minutes, and records, historical writings and other available material.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Articles on file in the History Room, Davie County Public Library, Mocksville, North Carolina.

1. "Eatons Baptist Church dates back to October 1772. Formerly known as Dutchmans Creek Baptist Church." By Gordon Tomlinson.
2. "A vivid description of launching plans for a new building 1925," by L. J. Hampton, Staff Correspondent, Winston-Salem Journal.
3. "History of Eatons Baptist Church." By Mrs. Wayne Ferebee, Church Historian, 1954.
4. "Eatons Baptist Church, once Dutchmans Creek Church, Founded in 1772. " By Miss Mary Heitman.
5. "History of Eatons Church from 1790 to 1890." By Dr. J. W. Wiseman.
6. Rev. John Angell. By Charles H. Utley.
7. "Eatons Church History." By Fred Leagans.
8. "History of Eatons Baptist Church." By Mrs. J. W. Etchison, Church Historian.
(Copy of this placed in Corner stone of present building June 1930. Read later at a meeting of the South Yadkin Association.)
9. Eatons Baptist Church - A Historical Sketch. By J. Frank Furches.
(This is incorporated in his book on family history - "The Furches Folks" 1971.
10. Churches of the Colonial Period in Rowan County - By Miss Adelaide Fries.
11. History of North Carolina Baptists. By G. W. Paschal, Vol. II.
12. Colonial Churches in North Carolina. By J. K. Rouse.
13. Card File of Cemetery inscriptions from 1778 - Eatons Church Cemetery.
14. History of Davie County. By James W. Wall

1. Church minutes, Vols. 1-2, 1772-1902.
2. Church Records, 1873, 1875, 1878, 1948.
3. W. M. S. U. minutes, Vol. 1, 1885-87.
4. South Yadkin Baptist Association.
5. Eatons Meeting House Record Book. 1790.
6. Copies of Church Minutes Books, received from Miss May Green.
7. Card file of Cemetery inscriptions from 1778, Eatons Church Cemetery, copied and presented by Miss Flossie Martin in the History Room at the Davie County Public Library, and in the Baptist Collection Room, in the Library at Wake Forest University.
8. Eaton's Church, Davie County. Biblical Recorder, January 15, 1879.
By J. W. Wiseman, Chairman Committee.

Committee:

Mrs. Minnie W. Pope
Mrs. Florence F. Ferebee
Mr. John Boyce Cain, Sr.
Mr. J. M. Eaton (deceased, 1971)
Miss Mossa E. Eaton, Chairman

Acknowledgement for help in the preparation of this sketch, goes to -

Miss Flossie Martin
Mrs. Annie Eaton Brower
Mrs. Faye Cain Rich
Miss Annie Laurie Etchison

